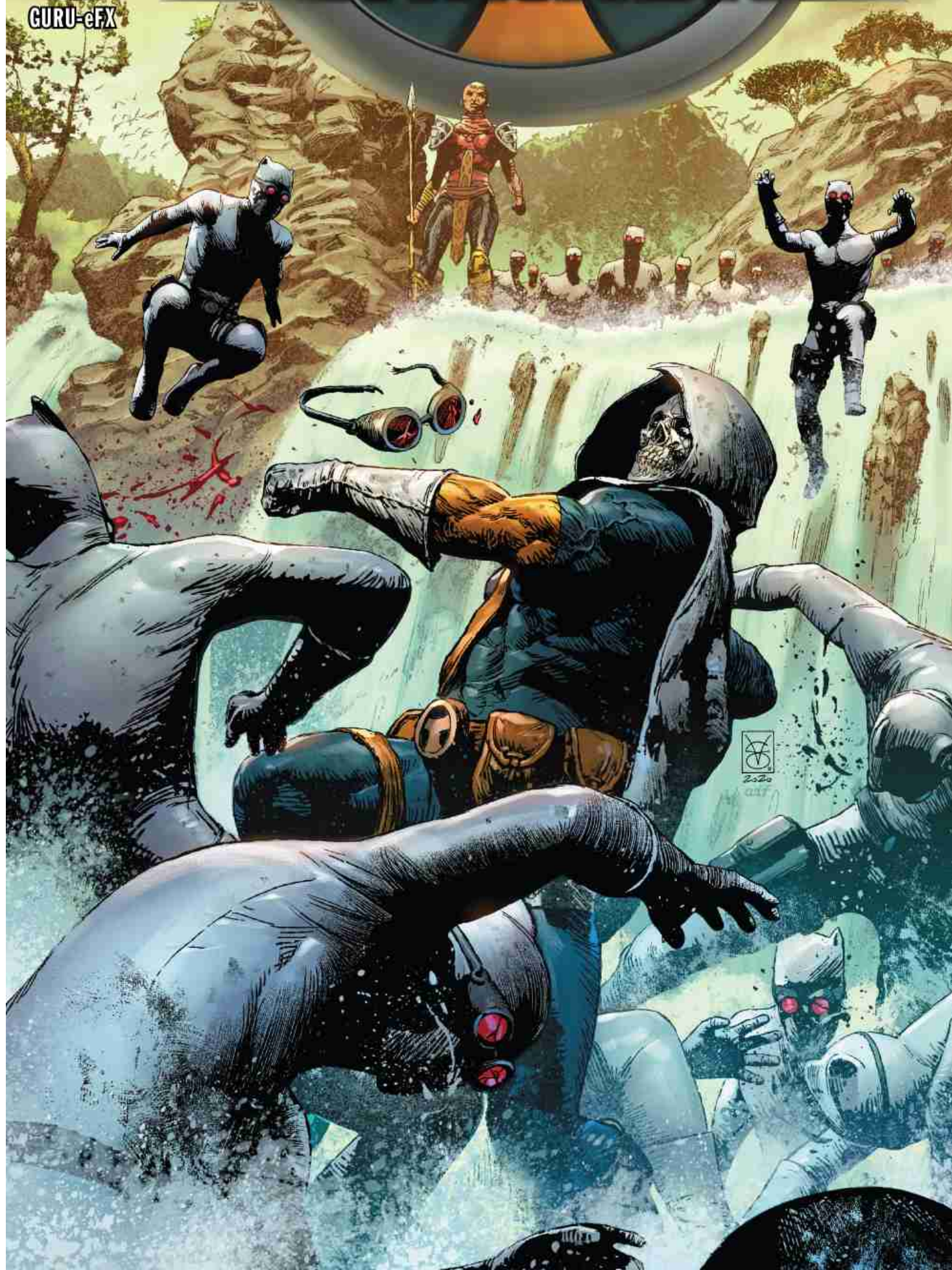


MARVEL

4

MacKAY
VITTI
GURU-eFX

TASKMASTER



Using innate photographic reflexes, Tony Masters is able to replicate any action he witnesses, no matter the complexity. Using these skills, combined with an arsenal of deadly facsimile weapons, he operates as a henchmen trainer and mercenary for hire known throughout the underworld as...

TASKMASTER

"THE RUBICON TRIGGER"

PART FOUR

MARIA HILL is dead, and the entire world thinks Taskmaster did it. He's innocent for once, but that's irrelevant. The BLACK WIDOW is already on his trail, and she won't be the only one.

One man believes Tony: former S.H.I.E.L.D. Director NICK FURY. He's willing to help, but he wants something in return. Before she died, Hill was working on something called the RUBICON TRIGGER, an old H.A.M.M.E.R. project. To access it, Fury needs the kinesic signatures of Squadron Supreme Director PHIL COULSON, Agents of Wakanda Director OKOYE and South Korea's N.I.S. Tiger Division Director AMI HAN.

Taskmaster has secured Coulson and Han's signatures - after bloody fights with Hyperion and the White Fox. His final opponent has no super-powers, but to get to her, Tony has to infiltrate the most technologically advanced country on the planet.

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I'VE
CHANGED MY
MIND!

I DON'T
WANT TO
DO THIS
ANYMORE!



SCARED,
TONY?

OF COURSE
I'M SCARED!
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT
A HALO INSERTION
INTO WAKANDA,
YOU MANIAC!

IT'S A
GOOD PLAN,
TONY. IT'S
YOUR PLAN,
REMEMBER?



DON'T
REMIND
ME.

THIS IS
THE LAST ONE,
TONY. THE LAST
ONE.

WE UNLOCK THE
RUBICON TRIGGER,
WE FIND OUT WHAT
GOT MARIA KILLED
AND WHO DID IT.

I MAKE
THEM PAY, AND
THE WIDOW IS
OFF YOUR
TRAIL.

EASY. NOW,
I GOT A LEAD
TO FOLLOW
UP.

UGH.



WE'RE
30 SECONDS
TILL JUMP.

UGH.



THIS
STINKS.



FURY
SAID IT WAS
MY PLAN.
AND IT IS.

I CAME
UP WITH IT,
FROM START
TO FINISH.

BUT IT'S NOT, IS IT?
NOT REALLY. THIS
WHOLE THING, THIS
WHOLE SITUATION...

IT'S A PART
OF SOMEONE
ELSE'S PLAN,
AND ME, FURY,
THE WIDOW...

WE'RE ALL JUST
PLAYING OUR
PARTS LIKE
SUCKERS.

AND I
HATE BEING
A SUCKER.

SURE, MARIA HILL *COULD* HAVE GOTTEN HERSELF KILLED LOOKING INTO THIS RUBICON TRIGGER THING.



SPIES DIE. THAT'S WHAT THEY'RE FOR. SO THEIR BOSSES CAN GET THINGS DONE WITHOUT RISKING THEIR OWN SKINS.

BUT I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT **BULLSEYE**, FROM BACK WHEN THIS WHOLE THING STARTED.

WHAT HE SAID ABOUT KILLING DAREDEVIL'S GIRLFRIENDS.

BULLSEYE THINKS THAT IF YOU KILL THE HERO'S GIRLFRIEND, THEIR WIFE OR PARTNER OR WHATEVER, THEN YOU'VE GOT AN EDGE OVER THEM.

BUT ALL THAT DOES IS GET THEM COMING AFTER YOU HARDER THAN EVER.

I'VE ADOPTED A "NO WIVES, NO GIRLFRIENDS, NO MOTHERS" POLICY.

NOT JUST BECAUSE IT'S **GROSS**, THOUGH IT IS.

NO, IT'S BECAUSE THESE HEROES. THESE GUYS...

...IT ALWAYS SEEMS THAT ALL THEY'RE WAITING FOR IS **ONE DEAD WOMAN** TO MOTIVATE THEM.

AND I GOT TO WONDER— IS THAT WHY MARIA HILL IS DEAD? TO GET FURY MOVING IN THE DIRECTION THAT **SOMEBODY** WANTS HIM TO?





LIKE I SAID,
IT *STINKS*.

BUT I HAVE **BIGGER**
PROBLEMS RIGHT NOW.
I JUST DROPPED INTO
WAKANDA UNINVITED.



AND I'VE
GOT TO GET
MY HEAD IN
THE GAME...



...EVEN IF IT'S BEING
PLAYED BY RULES
I DON'T REALLY
UNDERSTAND YET.



SO LET'S
SEE HOW
LONG MY
LUCK HOLDS.



LET'S SEE
HOW WELL
"MY PLAN"
HOLDS UP.



WELL,
THAT WAS
QUICK.

YOU DARE
INVADE THE
HOLY PALACE,
MERCENARY?



OKAY,
I KNOW
THIS LOOKS
BAD.

DOWN,
DOG!

I'M
DOWN, I'M
DOWN.

LOOK, I
NEED TO TALK
TO WHOEVER'S
IN CHARGE
HERE.



DOWN!

WHUFF!



THIS IS ALL...
...JUST A BIG MISUNDERSTANDING...

A MISUNDERSTANDING?

TELL ME, MURDERER FOR PAY, WHAT IS IT THAT I DO NOT UNDERSTAND ABOUT YOUR ACTIONS?

THERE SHE IS--OKOYE, WAKANDA'S TOUGHEST WARRIOR THIS SIDE OF THE KING HIMSELF.

I'M BEING PURSUED BY AN INSANE KILLER FOR A MURDER I DIDN'T COMMIT.

I CAN'T ESCAPE HER. SHE'S GOING TO KILL ME.

AGGHH!
DOWN!
DAMMIT.
I NEED TO SEE HER.

AND HOW IS THIS ANY CONCERN OF WAKANDA'S?



BECAUSE I THROW MYSELF
UPON THE MERCY OF THE
BLACK PANTHER AND HIS
GOLDEN THRONE.

I CLAIM
ASYLUM.

COME ON.
LET ME LIFT
MY HEAD.



ASYLUM.
YOU
CANNOT BE
SERIOUS.



I WILL
PROVE MY
WORTH.

YOU KNOW
MY REPUTATION.
LET ME KILL FOR
YOU. LET ME KILL
THE ENEMIES OF
WAKANDA.



WAKANDA HAS NO
NEED OF AMERICAN
MERCENARIES. WE
HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN
YOUR ROLE IN HYDRA'S
AVENGERS.*

I HAD
NO PART IN
THE ATTACK
ON WAKANDA!
I STRUCK AT
ATLANTIS!

DOES
WAKANDA
NOW SHED
TEARS FOR
ATLANTIS?

THIS ISN'T
WORKING.

IF I CAN'T SEE HER,
I CAN'T GET HER
KINESIC SIGNATURE.

*FROM SECRET
EMPIRE! --S.B.



**THE DUNGEONS.
LATER.**

I'VE BEEN IN A LOT
OF PRISONS, JAILS,
DUNGEONS, WHAT
HAVE YOU.

THIS ONE?
THREE
AND A HALF
STARS.

NO SHACKLES,
THAT'S NICE.

FOOD'S PRETTY
GOOD, LOTS OF
TIME TO EXERCISE.

ONLY
THING...

...THEY
TOOK MY
SKULL.

ON
YOUR FEET,
FOOL!

YOU INSULTED
THE HATUT
ZERAZE.

I CALLS
THEM LIKE
I SEES
THEM, PAL.

IF I HADN'T
WANTED TO GET
CAUGHT, YOU AND
YOUR RINKY-DINK,
STORE-BRAND BLACK
PANTHERS WOULDN'T
HAVE STOOD A
CHANCE.

YOU LIKE
TO TALK,
DON'T YOU,
AMERICAN?

I LIKE TO
FIGHT MORE'N I
LIKE TO TALK, BUT YOU
ALREADY KNEW THAT,
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE
HERE, ISN'T IT?





LIKE TAKING THE PRISONER OUT FOR A BEATING TO SAVE FACE.

GOT TO MAKE THIS GOOD THOUGH.

SO: HATUT ZERAZE.



THEY'RE LOYAL, WELL-TRAINED, BUT ULTIMATELY, THEY'RE HENCHMEN.

AND I KNOW HENCHMEN.



THEY GOT A VIBRANIUM MESH SUIT, WHICH MEANS YOU CAN'T PUNCH 'EM, CAN'T KICK 'EM, ETC.

BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO HIT A GUY TO HURT HIM.



AND I AIN'T TALKING ABOUT HIS FEELINGS.

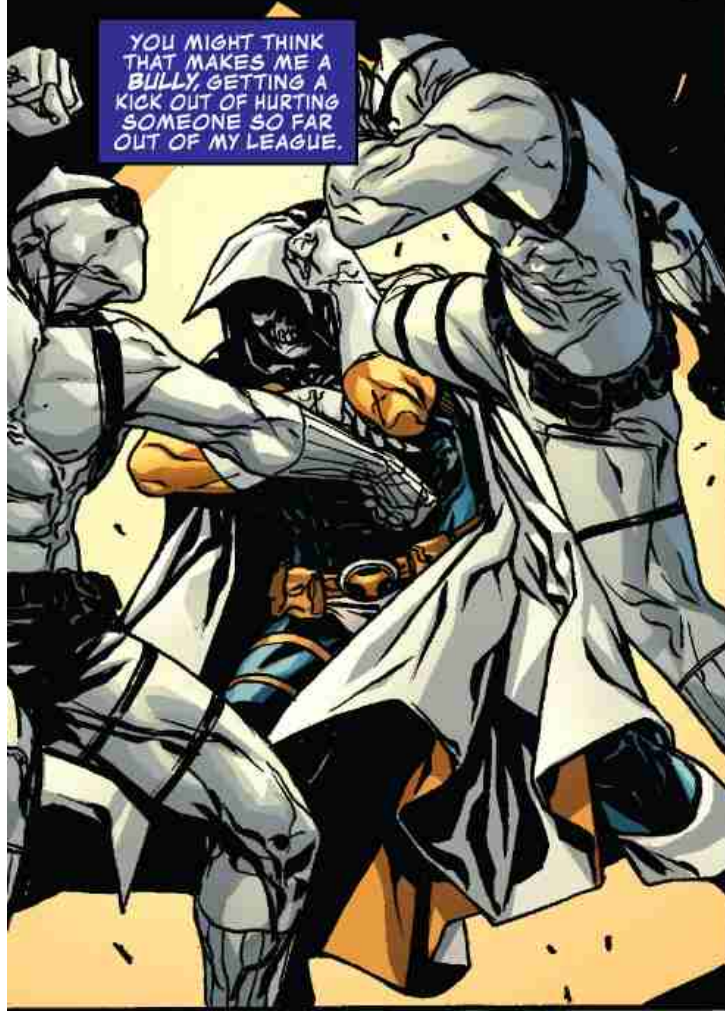
KRRKK

AGHH!



AFTER HYPERION, AFTER KOREA...TAKING A NORMAL GUY APART IS LIKE A BREATH OF FRESH AIR.

YOU DUMMIES STARTING TO UNDERSTAND WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH?



YOU MIGHT THINK THAT MAKES ME A BULLY, GETTING A KICK OUT OF HURTING SOMEONE SO FAR OUT OF MY LEAGUE.



YOU'D BE RIGHT.

I HURT PEOPLE FOR MONEY, AND YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY...

KRRKK AIE!



"CHOOSE A JOB YOU LOVE..."

C'MERE.



"...AND YOU'LL NEVER HAVE TO WORK A DAY IN YOUR LIFE."

HRGH.



I CAN KILL THEM, IF YOU WANT.

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU DEAL WITH FAILURE HERE IN WAKANDA.

I THINK, MERCENARY...

...THAT YOU MUST BE TAUGHT A LESSON.

HERE WE GO.

NOW WE'RE TALKING.





BUT
SOMETIMES
THAT'S
OKAY.

YOU KNOW
WHAT I'M
TALKING
ABOUT!

DO YOU
EVER
SHUT UP?



JUST BEING
FRIENDLY.

YOU'RE
MAGNIFICENT,
BY THE
WAY.

EXCUSE
ME?

THAT KICK
SHOULD'VE
SHATTERED YOUR
STERNUM.

I SEEN
BATROC USE IT ON
CAPTAIN AMERICA
ONE TIME. WINDED
HIM, WHICH TELLS YOU
ALL YOU NEED TO
KNOW.



LIKE I SAID.
YOU'RE
MAGNIFICENT.

BUT I
OVERCLOCKED
MY BRAIN CHEMISTRY
YEARS AGO. I GOT
A MOTOR CORTEX
LIKE A HEMI
V-8.

YOU WANT
TO SEE WHAT I
CAN BRING TO
WAKANDA?



I'LL
GIVE YOU
THE GRAND
TOUR.





YOU HAD
ENOUGH?

THIS DOESN'T
NEED TO GO
ON ANY LONGER.



NO.
YOU
HAVE YET
TO IMPRESS
ME.

I GOT HER
KINESIC
SIGNATURE
LOCKED IN.



BUT I SURE
AS HELL AIN'T
SAYING UNCLE
FIRST.



NOT
IMPRESSED,
HUH?



NOT
IMPRESSED?!



HOW'S
THIS FOR
IMPRESSED?

CHOK



I THINK
I HAVE SEEN
ENOUGH.

RETURN
OUR GUEST TO
THE DUNGEONS,
PLEASE.

...DID SHE
SOUND
IMPRESSED?

LATER.

THEY LET ME
KEEP MY SKULL
ON THIS TIME.

DIDN'T HAVE TO
WAIT LONG UNTIL
THEY THOUGHT UP
SOMETHING NEW
TO DO WITH ME.

MOVE
ALONG,
SCUM.

WE
DOING THIS
AGAIN?
SUITS
ME.

NO...

I'VE DECIDED
WHAT I WANT
TO DO WITH YOU,
MERCENARY.

WHILE THERE
ARE ANY NUMBER
OF PUNISHMENTS I
MIGHT LIKE TO VISIT
UPON YOU...

...I TRULY
CANNOT THINK OF
ANYTHING WORSE THAN
THE UNITED STATES
CRIMINAL JUSTICE
SYSTEM.

WAIT,
WHAT?

INDEED.

ELEMENTS OF
THE U.S. INTELLIGENCE
SERVICES REACHED OUT
TO US. IT APPEARS THEY
ARE QUITE KEEN TO SEE
YOU PUNISHED FOR YOUR
CRIMES DURING THE
HYDRA REGIME.

NO!
NO!
YOU
CAN'T SEND
ME BACK!



YOU DO THIS, I'M A DEAD MAN! YOU'RE SIGNING MY DEATH WARRANT!

I CERTAINLY HOPE SO. BUT THIS WAY...



...WE NEEDN'T BURY YOUR BODY IN WAKANDAN EARTH.

DON'T DO THIS TO ME.

I'M BEGGING YOU. THIS IS ME BEGGING.



THE U.S. GOVERNMENT APPRECIATES YOU ACCOMMODATING US LIKE THIS.

THE KINGDOM OF WAKANDA APPRECIATES YOU TAKING BACK YOUR TRASH.

NO! NO! SHE'LL KILL ME!



WELL, WELL, WELL.

WE'RE WHEELS UP IN TEN, TASKMASTER. THEN IT'S BACK TO THE USA.

IS THE DOOR CLOSED?

IT IS.



THEN GET ME OUT OF THESE SHACKLES AND GET ME A DAMN DRINK WITH AN UMBRELLA IN IT. I BEEN IN A DUNGEON FOR THE BETTER PART OF A WEEK AND I'M THIRSTY.

YOU GET IT?

I GOT IT.

THE KINESIC SIGNATURE OF OKOYE, ALONG WITH AMI HAN'S AND PHIL COULSON'S, ALL LOCKED UP BETWEEN MY EARS.

OUTSTANDING. LET'S GO BACK HOME.

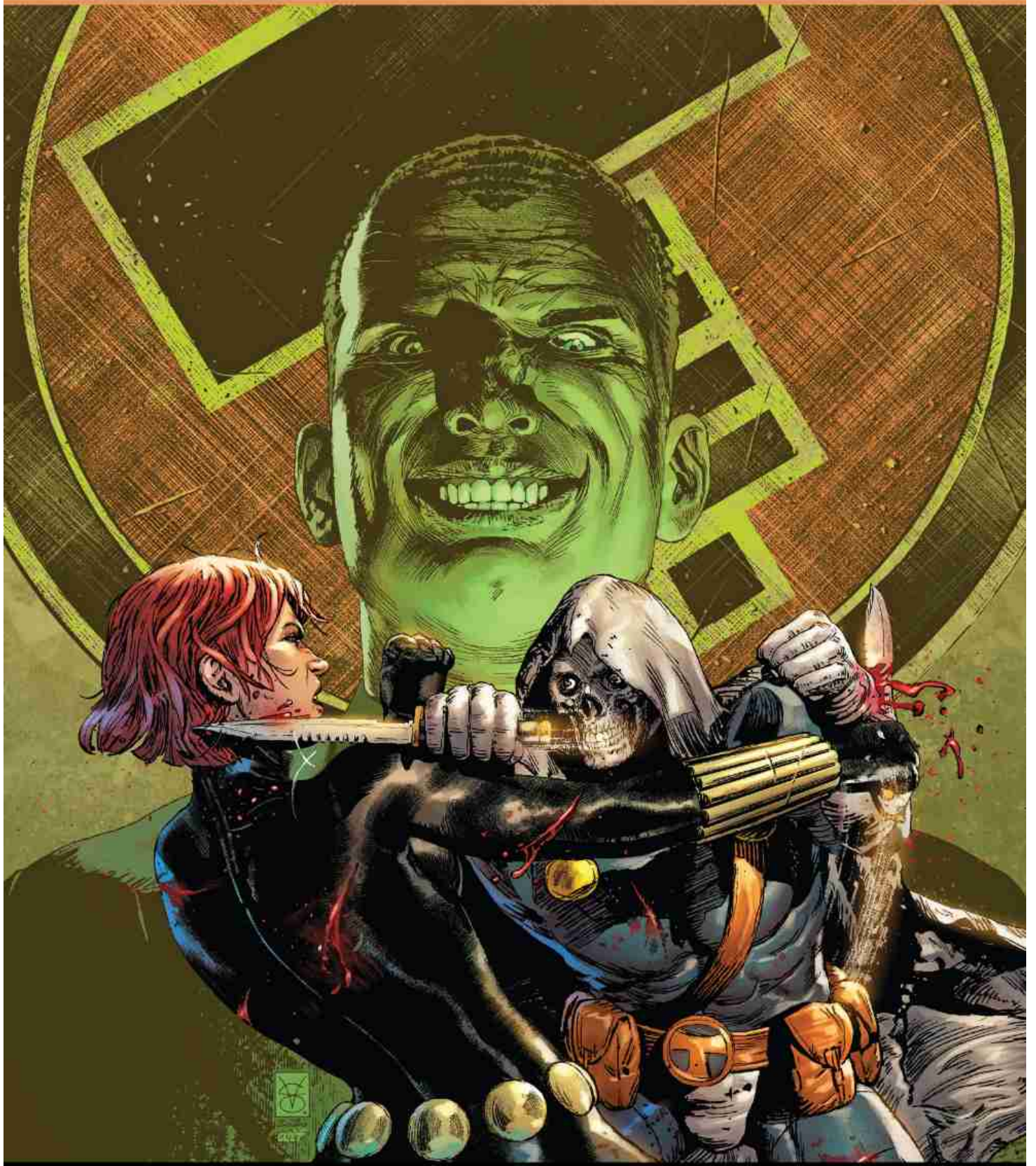
BACK HOME.

"LET'S GO BACK HOME AND END THIS."



TO BE CONCLUDED!

NEXT ISSUE



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